DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 002 RC 016 864

TITLE The El Arco Iris Program. REACH: Realistic Educational Achievement Can Happen. Volume II, Part 6 of 6.
INSTITUTION Texas Education Agency, Austin.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 7p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Distribution, Texas Education Agency, 1701 N. Congress Ave., Austin, TX 7801-14940 ($1.00).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education Programs; Disadvantaged Youth; *Educational Television; *English (Second Language); Hispanic Americans; *Parent Participation; *Preschool Curriculum; Preschool Education; Program Descriptions; Public Schools; Second Language Instruction; Spanish Speaking; Supplementary Education
IDENTIFIERS Brownsville Independent School District TX; *El Arco Iris Program TX

ABSTRACT

El Arco Iris is a supplementary pre-school program for Hispanic 4- and 5-year-old children and their parents. The Brownsville (Texas) Independent School District operates the program. Ninety-five percent of the kindergarten children in this district begin school speaking little or no English and median family incomes are among the lowest in the state. El Arco Iris aims to upgrade the entrance-level readiness skills of children whose performance might be inhibited by language difficulties. Twice weekly parents and their children attend 90-minute sessions that include a television presentation in which a story is read and major concepts presented. A bilingual teacher presents the television lesson, which contains footage of locations in the community. Paraprofessional aides provide further instruction, show parents how to complete activities at home, and emphasize learning with children. Evaluation studies show positive gains in language for participants. Parents are unanimously positive about the project, and the schools feel it has encouraged and improved learning in kindergarten for this otherwise disadvantaged population of students. A schedule of lessons and sample topics are provided with the program description. (KS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED347002

THE FUTURE IS

EL ARCO IRIS PROGRAM

BROWNSVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

LINDA KEMP

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

REACH

REALISTIC EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT CAN HAPPEN

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

RC016864

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Challenge

Located on the Rio Grande, Brownsville has a large Hispanic population, including many households in which only Spanish is spoken. In a survey conducted in 1980, Brownsville ISD administrators discovered 95 percent of the district's kindergarten children would begin their school year speaking little or no English.

At the same time, kindergarten teachers in the district indicated in a districtwide survey that they could not be effective in their teaching without support in addressing the language and developmental needs of incoming kindergarten students. They called for the adoption of a pre-school program that would prepare students for formal schooling so that opportunities for learning might be improved.

Parents were believed to be a key influence upon young children. Thus the new pre-kindergarten program, in conjunction with the state mandated program, was directed to parents as well as to their children.

Brownsville ISD, like many school districts, operates under limited resources. With one of the lowest median family incomes in the state (under $13,000 in 1983), the district simply could not afford to commit additional funds to new programs. The idea of drawing on an already thinly stretched teaching staff to add an additional educational project seemed difficult, if not impossible. The school population was growing rapidly and so was the demand for staff, materials, equipment, and facilities. Still, the problem the district faced could not be ignored.

So, while the district felt strongly that there was great need to prepare young children for successful entry into public education, it also felt the constraints of limited staff and resources. How could they meet this need in a way that was effective, involved parents, and, at the same time, did not drain the district's staff and facilities? The answer came in the addition of a non-traditional, highly innovative approach to developing learning and language readiness in pre-kindergarten children.

Program Evaluation

***El Arco Iris* has been carefully evaluated by professionals outside the district who conclude:**

- **There was an average weekly attendance of 330 children in 1982-83. (This number has increased, as more sites have been added)**
- **For those children who attend at least 12 hours of the instruction, participation averaged 60.66 hours.**
- **A total of 75 instructional videotapes and accompanying materials have been produced and packaged.**
- **Participating parents are uniformly enthusiastic about the ITV project, citing several specific benefits for them and their children as a result of the project. Parents are especially complimentary of the ITV staff. Several sugggestions for improving the program in the future were offered by parents.**
- **Staff development in support of the project occurs during the year, assuring proper execution.**
- **There was a noticeable benefit in readiness in both English and Spanish for participants compared to children who did not participate in the program. This result was found in both 1981-82 and 1982-83 data.**
- **Information from ITV graduates currently finishing first grade in Brownville indicates that they achieve both Spanish and English reading readiness in greater proportions than the non-ITV graduate Brownville kindergartener. This advantage is also evident in the CTBS test (both English and Spanish) results of ITV, when graduates are compared with the total Brownsville non-ITV graduate kindergarten population.**

INNOVATIONS

El Arco Iris is a supplementary pre-school program for four- and five-year-old children and their parents. This program is designed to upgrade the entrance-level readiness skills of children whose performance in school might be inhibited by their ability to communicate in and understand English. In *El Arco Iris*, Spanish is used to improve language development in both languages.

El Arco Iris is thorough and broad in its approach to developing readiness in pre-schoolers. A group of about twenty children are selected for participation at each program site. To attend, each child must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. This enables follow-up activities at home, helps parents to be involved in their child's education, and establishes a collaborative attitude between school and home. The support and on-going instruction provided for parents are key elements in the success of this program. In addition, parents' language skills in English may also improve. Parents learn not only about lesson and language objectives, but about child development as well.

The program has been carefully evaluated for its measurable impact on student learning. Evaluation studies show positive gains in language for those who participate in the program, especially for those entering at a low level of language ability. Parents are unanimously positive in their response to the project, and the schools feel it has encouraged and improved learning in kindergarten for this otherwise disadvantaged population of students.

An elementary school library, cafeteria or classroom serves as the location for *El Arco Iris*. Parents and their children come twice a week for 90-minute sessions. These sessions include a television presentation in which a favorite children's story is read and major concepts are presented. Two aides or trained parent volunteers assist children and parents in responding to the directions given in the instructional television lesson. Some time is spent with parents separately, teaching them to use enrichment activities with their children at home and also providing them with information on child development and children's learning needs. During the time parents are working, students work with an aide to develop skills presented in the lesson. These instructional videotapes include lessons in Spanish and English and have been evaluated for age level and language appropriateness.

The television lesson is presented by an experienced and effective bilingual teacher, whose clear communication and warm personality are attractive to pre-school children. Also featured in these lessons is a favorite of the children—Jack, the jack-in-the-box character. Jack shows application of the lesson objectives with clown antics that keep the children laughing and watching, stimulating their imaginations. Puppets, games, puzzles, musical instruments and singing, and other colorful materials help the children stay involved in the lesson and keep it from being a passive learning experience. Each video lesson has shots in settings around the Brownsville area, providing an opportunity for the children to see locales they recognize and to become more familiar with their community. The lessons end with the reading of a favorite or classic children's story.

A team teaching approach was chosen, in which a pair of instructional aides work at each site. The aides oversee two programs and develop all necessary instructional materials for these programs. These paraprofessionals provide further instruction on the lesson objectives, give direction for parents on home reinforcement and enrichment activities, and emphasize learning with children.

The innovative approach of *El Arco Iris* makes both learning and the child's experience with public education fun. Through this program, these pre-kindergarteners are able to begin a lifetime of learning with a positive attitude and increased possibility for success.

The Benefits

El Arco Iris has not only demonstrated improvement in language skills by carefully measured evaluation, but has also received praise from all sides.

Parents of children participating in *El Arco Iris* had these comments:

- My child learned more Spanish;
- The program prepared my children for the beginning of school;
- Children learned to get along with one another;
- My child has grown socially;
- My child lost his or her fear of school;
- I learned more English;
- My child has learned a specific academic skill;
- Fathers have gotten involved with their children in a way they had not before; and
- Children become bilingual quickly—and, by the time they are four or five years of age, they are speaking two languages.

Teachers have also been very pleased with the results of the program. Their job has been made easier because the children are ready for school. They have commented that students who come from *El Arco Iris*:

- Are more verbal in both Spanish and English;
- Interact well with other students;
- Are more interested and involved in what goes on in the classroom;
- Show more curiosity about what is being studied—they are eager to learn who, what, when, where, and why;
- Are well coordinated, especially with fine motor tasks like using scissors and writing;
- Understand and follow instructions readily;
- Know about colors, shapes, numbers, etc.;
- Are ready to get started with school; and
- Show real leadership capabilities and are looked up to by classmates.

The benefits for the children are obvious. They feel good about themselves and they are excited about learning. They not only have a chance to survive, but also to excel. The language improvement in both English and Spanish is important to their ability to learn and communicate in both languages. The social, physical and emotional gains of the children in the program are highly beneficial as well. The impact of parental involvement is hard to overemphasize. Real bonding between parent and child occurs through learning and working together.

For the parents themselves, there are benefits as well. They become closer to their children. They see themselves having a vital role in their child's education, while at the same time becoming more comfortable about working with the school. With the emphasis on language, their own language abilities improve along with their children's.

When the benefits and results of the program are considered, we can agree with Raul Besteiro, BISD superintendent, who says, "This is the best money the federal government has spent on children."

Cost

El Arco Iris is not expensive. Existing facilities are used and materials are minimal. Each site needs a 17" or 19" television and video recorder, which is the only unusual equipment. Per pupil costs for the ITV project, based on two years of data and NOT including the videotape development cost is approximately $300 per pupil. A new adoption site for the ITV project would expect to pay $50 per lesson for reproduction of videotapes and masters of materials, as well as budget $348 per expected participant to pay for staff and support. The more ITV teams in the district, the lower the per pupil costs since only one coordinator is needed for any number of teams. These costs also includes start-up expenses totaling $4,975.

"Excellence...is not an act, but a habit." — *Aristotle*

This document describes the El Arco Iris Program. This program has been selected by the Texas Education Agency as one of six exemplary educational programs. Like all of the programs in this series, the El Arco Iris Program addresses a basic educational need in an innovative and effective way.

EL ARCO IRIS PROGRAM

THE VISION

It is believed in Brownsville ISD that all children can learn, and all children should enter school with every possibility for success. To create a greater opportunity for the achievement of young children in the district, *El Arco Iris* was created to support the children's language, emotional, social, and physical development; to generate a positive attitude in these young learners toward school; and to encourage a supportive attitude on the part of parents, while providing them with the skills they need to participate in their children's learning. *El Arco Iris* is used as a supplement to the state mandated prekindergarten program passed in May 1985 (Tex. Ed. Code, Section 21.136).

El Arco Iris began in response to a startling demographic statistic. In 1980, the administrators of the Brownsville ISD discovered that 95 percent of the district's kindergarten children would begin their school year speaking little or no English. It was clear that students entering kindergarten under this condition would have a difficult time, and would probably find their first school experience frustrating and filled with failure. Kindergarten teachers were alarmed at the enormity of the task they faced. This image contradicted the one held by the district—an image of students learning successfully. Administrators, kindergarten teachers, and parents sought a way to enhance the abilities of their children, and to assure a smooth transition into school.

A spirit of creativity, an understanding of the needs and ways of learning of young children, a desire to address the practical concerns facing the district, and a forward looking technological approach all came together in the design of *El Arco Iris*. In this program, children and their parents attend classes twice a week for instruction that includes a television presentation, learning activities, and interactive time with parents and students both separately and together. The television lessons include presentations on concepts that build toward learning objectives established for kindergarten, that expose the children to the community in which they live, and that tell favorite stories in both Spanish and English. Class activities reinforce the lesson while they develop physical skills and fine-motor coordination. Students' lessons are designed to encourage expression of thoughts and to develop social interaction skills as well. In separate instruction, parents create visual aides and activities for their children to use at home to reinforce the lesson and enrich their children's learning and use of language.

The symbol for *El Arco Iris* is the rainbow—sign of life and hope—and a favorite of young children. As children and their parents listen and talk, sing and do art, as they play and work, they engage in learning together. Through participation in *El Arco Iris*, the rainbow, the way is paved for a lifetime of learning for these young children.

SCHEDULE OF LESSONS

8:00	**Opening exercises—including homework check and overview of lesson**
8:40	**View Instructional Television (ITV) lesson**
9:00	**Discuss ITV lesson** **Group 1 — children** **Group 2 — parents**
9:05	**Reinforce ITV lesson—song, poem, fingerplay presented in videotape**
9:15	**Spanish or English lesson—activities frequently related to videotape theme or auditory skills**
9:30	**English as a second language (ESL) lesson**
9:40	**Reinforce ESL lesson—activities frequently related to videotape theme or motor skills**
9:45	**Parents and children are grouped together for the remainder of class View ITV Story — children's classic read in Spanish with a gradual transition to English as the school year progresses. Reinforce ITV story with questions and discussion**
9:50	**View ITV home activity—provides additional reinforcement and develops fine motor skills**
10:00	**Summary, evaluation and dismissal**

Sample of Lesson Topics For Children & Parents

My School and Classroom Environment
My Family
Who Am I? Parts of My Body
The Police Officer & Police Station
The Grocer & Grocery Store
Your Child's Development
Children Learn Through Play
Safety-Using the Traffic Signal
Halloween
Fruits & Vegetables
The Bakery
Animals on the Farm
Parents: The Child's Most Significant Teachers
Thanksgiving
The Clothing Store
Christmas-Decorating the Christmas Tree
Chistmas Customs-Las Posadas
Air Vehicles
Sea Vehicles
Land Vehicles
Guiding Your Child's Behavior
St. Valentine's Day Customs
The Rodeo
Show & Carnival
Is Your Child Afraid?
Giving Your Child a Good Start
Words, Words, Words
Let's Make Friends

REACH

Vol. II, Part 6
Exemplary Program Practices Series

The El Arco Iris Program is one of six programs highlighted in REACH, Vol. II, Parts 1-6. A training package for each of the six identified programs has been developed and can be requested through the Educational Service Centers. Training package includes: brochure, videotapes, videoguides, workshop outlines, fact sheets, and implementation guides on six practices.

This REACH document is a publication of the Texas Education Agency, Division of Exemplary Programs. The Division's objective is to identify and disseminate information on exemplary and/or innovative school practices throughout Texas. The production and dissemination of this REACH document and associated training materials were conducted by NuStats, Inc. of Austin under the Exemplary Program Practices series contract to TEA. For additional copies of REACH Vol. II, Part 6, please contact Publications Distribution, Texas Education Agency, 1701 N. Congress Ave., Austin, Texas, 78701-1494 in writing. The cost is $1.00 per copy.